

Central American

NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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The **Central American Group** is a part of the **Spanish Main Philatelic Society**, the leading Society in the world for collectors of Latin America. The journal of the SMPS is *The Mainsheet*, published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription from the Secretary, Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England. Phone 01733 2687078. Subscription is currently £8 in Europe or \$20 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling or US\$ should be made payable to "The Spanish Main". A three year subscription of £21/\$54 and a five year subscription of £30/\$80 are available and payment for these longer subscriptions may be made by Access, Mastercard or Visa.

The **Central American Group** caters for the collectors of Mexico to Panama. Its journal, which you are now reading, is published quarterly, and is available by annual subscription. The subscription is currently £6/\$11 resident in the UK or in Europe, or £8/\$15 elsewhere. Cheques in sterling payable to "The CA Group" should be sent to the treasurer, David Hankey, 2 Prince's Drive, Marple, STOCKPORT SK6 6NJ, England. Phone 0161-449 0693. We shall be pleased to forward the relevant portions of multi-subscription cheques to the SMPS or the Chile Group.

We regret we cannot accept dollar cheques for subscriptions because each cheque costs £5/\$8 to negotiate.

Back issues are available to members at 75p/\$1.50 each, although issues 1-20 inclusive can be purchased for £10/\$20 complete. Non-members may request a sample copy for 75p/\$1.50 post paid. Requests for back issues should be sent to the Editor, to whom cheques should be made payable. Undated dollar cheques are acceptable for this service.

The group leader is Richard Saundry, Gwrych Cottage, Godstone Road, Bletchingley, REDHILL RH1 4PL, Surrey, England. Phone 01883 742186.

The group does not run a packet. The SMPS Packet Secretary is Brian Sylvester, 3 Russell Court, St Lukes Road, MAIDENHEAD SL6 7AP Berkshire, England. Phone 01628 784555.

Although most packets are of a general nature, there are occasional specialised one country packets. Good and unusual material is always wanted.

Owing to insurance difficulties, the packet is not available to overseas members, although we shall be pleased to accept material for inclusion from them.

The auctioneer of the SMPS is Brian Moorhouse, to whom Auction and Private Treaty lots should be sent. Brian is a dealer, and will include your name on his mailing list if requested to do so.

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EDITORIAL

I mentioned in my last Editorial that I was unable to publish the Sarasota awards as I had lost the letter from Cécile Gruson. She has very kindly written to me again and I am pleased to inform you of the following awards to our members;

Fernando gold and grand
Richard A Washburn, Honduras, Introducing C19th stamps & postal history - GOLD
Michael Schreiber, Postal Stationery of Nicaragua, 1878-1899 - VERMEIL and 2 awards
Cécile Gruson, Guatemala - The Reconstruction Tax Stamps - SILVER (only 2 frames)
Clyde R Maxwell, Early Airmails of Nicaragua - SILVER

We send our congratulations to them all.

MIDPEX was a superb event, although it did not bring us the hoped for boost in membership. It did give us the opportunity to meet many of our members for the first time and to raise our profile amongst the 'mainstream' philatelic societies who were unaware of our existence. All in all a great success - apart from the fire alarm at our hotel at 7.00 a.m. and Dick Saundry finding out he had to pay extra for his breakfast and that I didn't! I heard very good reports from every dealer I spoke to which was to be expected since they all knew the sort of collectors attending and hence the sort of material to bring. MIDPEX will be repeated in two years time, the dealers will make sure of that, and we expect to be there.

Dates for your diary include **Saturday 30 September 1995** when the meeting at the new venue of The Union Jack Club, in Waterloo, London SE12, will be devoted to Maritime philately. Also at the same venue on **Saturday 2 December 1995** the Spanish Main are meeting, but as yet there are no further details.

I have had no comments regarding the presentation of our journal other than a suggestion that we change the volume number each year. We originally made each 20 issues a volume because we felt that this would be the appropriate number of issues to bind together to offer as back issues to new members. You may recall that Volume 1 was actually bound and offered for sale. It may well be that we repeat this for Volumes 2 and 3 as single issues run out. Currently all back issues are available - please see inside cover for details.

mpb

GUATEMALA: REGISTRY RATES & MARKINGS

Part 1: Until 1900

by CECILE GRUSON

The registry service was first introduced in the *Kingdom of Guatemala* in 1768, when the mail services passed from the *Correos Mayores* to the Spanish Crown. Until Guatemala joined the UPU in 1881, the fees were very high and there are very few surviving covers or fronts. The fact that the address part of the wrappers was used as a receipt did not favour conservation of such items, which were mostly discarded once the sender had received confirmation that his correspondence had arrived safely.

In this early period when postage was normally paid by the receiver, the *registry fee always had to be prepaid*. Prior to 1824, regular postage on registered mail could be prepaid or unpaid at the sender's option. With the postal law of 1824 regular postage as well as the registry fee were to be fully prepaid. The addressee was not entitled to keep the outer wrapper of such mail, but had to sign and usually date his acknowledgement of receipt on the reverse of the address panel, which was then returned to the sender as a confirmation of delivery.

Rates during the colonial and early independence period, in addition to regular postage.

	<u>Within Spanish America</u>	<u>To Spain</u>
1768 under 1 oz.	10 reales	20 reales
over 1 oz.	20 reales	40 reales
	<u>Within Kingdom of Guatemala</u>	<u>To Spain</u>
1778 to 314 oz.	10 reales	20 reales
1 oz. or more	20 reales	40 reales
	<u>Within Kingdom. Mexico. Isles</u>	<u>To Spain</u>
1796 to 314 oz.	10 reales	20 reales
1 oz. or more	20 reales	40 reales
	<u>Central America. Mexico & Latin America</u>	<u>Spain. USA & rest of world</u>
1824 under 1 oz.	8 reales	12 reales
over 1 oz.	12 reales	16 reales

Rates between 1871 and 1900, in addition to regular postage.

	Domestic		UPU Countries		Non-UPU Countries
	Registry	Declared value per 20 pesos or fraction	Registry	Advice of receipt	
May 13, 1873 (1871?)	1 peso				
August 1, 1881	75c		10c	5c	*
December 18, 1882	15c	5c	10c	5c	--
July 1, 1893	15c	20c	10c	5c	--
January 20, 1894	15c	25c	10c	5c	--
September 24, 1895	15c	30c	10c	5c	--
October 27, 1891			10c	5c (optional)	--

* No registry service was available for non-UPU countries, with the exception of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, where mail could be sent registered at a fee of 1 peso.

To UPU countries, the rate was specified as being 10c for registry and 5c for advice of receipt; the latter was compulsory until 1898. Until the first half of 1884, the advice of receipt fee was documented by a stamp affixed to the form, not to the cover.

The domestic registry rate prior to 1882 must have provided some form of protection of contents, as the 1873 *Gula Postal* states that

"Art.3: Any letter or packet for which registration is required will have to be franked and, if it contains value papers of any sort, presented open so that due note of the contents can be made in the registry book".

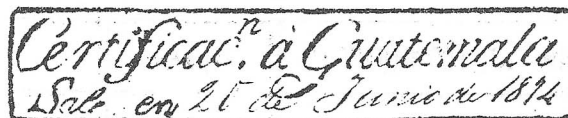
With the international registry rate at 15 c, the 1881 domestic rate of 75 c appeared excessive, which led to the separation of registry and declared value in December 1882. Letters containing values usually bear a wax seal on the reverse. During the XIXth century, there was no mention of contents on the outside of the cover, to protect mail carriers from being assaulted. Maximum value which could be insured was 1,000 pesos. Only first and second class post offices were habilitated to forward declared value mail, for a maximum of 1,000 and 100 pesos respectively. Third class post offices could only handle registered mail without value.

Markings

The earliest registry marking that has survived is dated 1814, but judging from the state of the marking, it must have been in use for some time prior to that. The handstamp was similar in style to those used in other Spanish colonies, with a space to fill in the date in manuscript. Two varieties of this boxed handstamp are known and illustrated below.

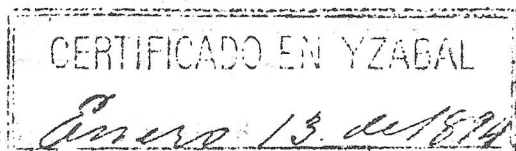


1814-1859, black



1874, black

It is probable several of these devices existed over such a long period. The later type was (still?) in use after the introduction of postage stamps. The boxed registry cancellation used in provincial post offices in the 1880's (that of Izabal, illustrated below) is an intermediate between the pre-stamp type and the more modern markings. For some of the places listed, it is only known from off-cover stamps.



1885-1899, purple, violet, blue
also recorded from
Mazatenango - Solola - Totonicapan.

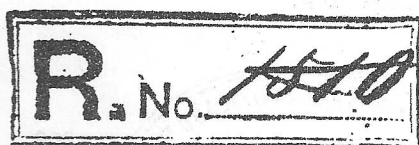
Datestamps for the registry service appeared from 1882 onwards, in a variety of shapes. Prior to the 1890's, special datestamps for registered mail only existed in the capital Guatemala and Quezaltenango, which was then the most important city economically. All other post offices used their current datestamps with one of the many types of registry boxes.

The earliest example of a registry box to note the number (illustrated in this study) is on a cover mailed in 1883. As the one registered item known prior to 1883 only carries a manuscript number, it could well be that Guatemala started using registry boxes only in 1883. Several types were evidently supplied to a great number of post offices and remained in use until they were worn beyond recognition.

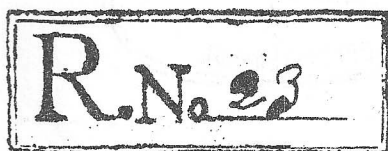
From 1894 onwards, the "A.R." handstamps in a variety of designs came into use, probably as a result of one of the UPU directives. At least one of two different types must have been available in many smaller towns.

Illustrations were mostly prepared from actual strikes, rather than traced, to give a better idea of details and some of the typical distortions. For some markings, it was necessary to combine parts of two strikes to obtain a clear and complete marking.

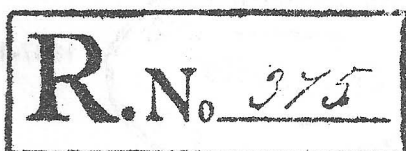
Registry boxes



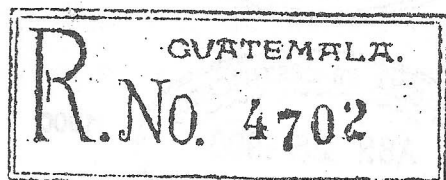
Guatemala 1883-1886
many provincial post
offices, many colors



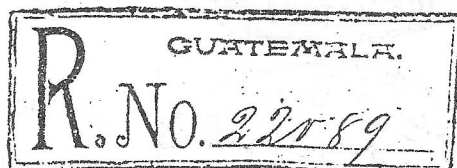
many provincial post
offices, 1889-1928
purple, blue, black



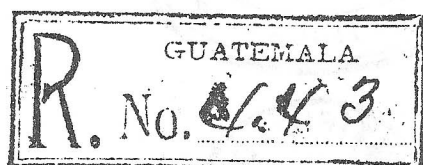
Huehuetenango, 1898



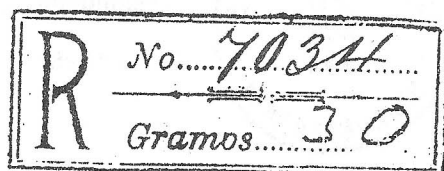
1894-1895
purple



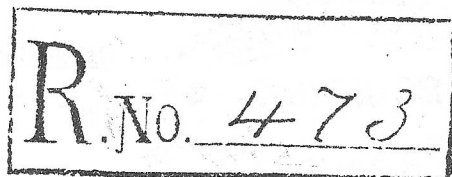
1897-1900
purple



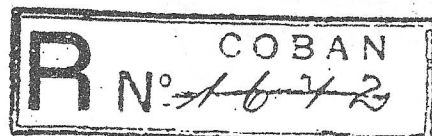
1901-1902
purple



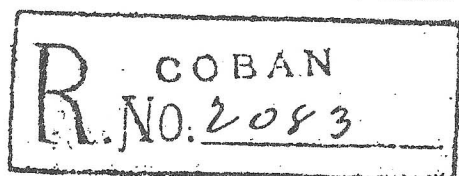
Guatemala, 1893
Quezaltenango, 1910-1911



1898-1930, Guatemala
and many provincial
post offices,
purple, violet, blue



Coban, 1892-1897
purple



Coban, 1900

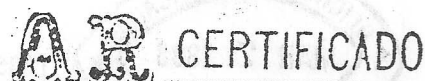
Advice of receipt markings



Guatemala
1894-1898



A. R. Guatemala
1898-1899



Guatemala, 1899-1901, violet

A. R. Antigua
1894

A. R. Amatitlan, 1895
Huehuetenango

A. R. 1895-1897
many post offices

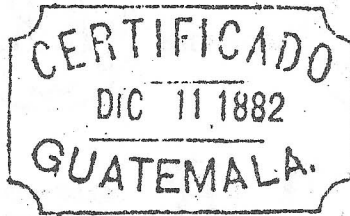
A R 1897
Quezaltenango

A. R. 1897
Retalhuleu



Guatemala - 1898-1903 - purple
used to cancel stamps on registered covers

Guatemala



Guatemala, 1882-1884
purple, rose

Quezaltenango, 1887
violet



1885-1886



1893-1897
purple, green



1894-1900



1898-1902
purple



1900



1899, purple



1900-1909
blue, purple, violet

Quezaltenango



1896



1897-1899



1900



Antigua

1894-1895



Huehuetenango

1898



Retalhuleu

1897

Artwork was kept at a minimum and consisted mainly in removing manuscript notes, ink blots and/or parts of other cancellations, and completing frames and lettering. Dates and place(s) of use, colours were indicated where known: if only one date is given, it means either that all copies studied were used in that year, or that only one strike was available.

As the ultimate goal is to produce an as complete as possible handbook on cancellations, I would very much appreciate any additional input you can supply, including clearer illustrations of the markings shown.

Continued from page 368.

Costa Rican Air Mail Rates to American Countries.

(11 Mar 1930 to 14 Feb 1938)

For each 15 gms, or fraction thereof.

Country	11 Mar 30	1 Oct 32	6 Jly 35	Country	11 Mar 30	1 Oct 32	6 Jly 35
United States	<u>0.80</u>	<u>1.05</u>	<u>1.40</u>	Haiti	1.20	1.50	2.05
Argentina	<u>1.80</u>	2.20	3.05	Honduras	0.80	1.05	1.40
Bahamas	1.00	1.35	<u>1.75</u>	Brit. Honduras	0.80	1.10	1.50
Bolivia	1.60	1.95	2.70	Jamaica	----	----	2.05
Brazil	2.20	2.40	3.70	Leeward Is.	1.20	1.55	2.15
Canada	<u>1.08</u>	1.40	1.85	Mexico	<u>0.80</u>	1.05	1.40
Canal Zone	<u>0.40</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>0.75</u>	Nicaragua	<u>0.80</u>	1.05	0.75
Chile	1.60	1.95	2.70	Panama	<u>0.40</u>	0.60	0.75
Colombia	0.80	1.50	2.05	Paraguay	1.80	2.20	3.05
Cuba	<u>0.80</u>	1.05	1.40	Peru	1.20	1.50	2.05
Curacao	0.80	1.10	1.50	Puerto Rico	1.20	1.50	2.05
Dominican Rep.	1.20	1.50	2.05	Trinidad	0.80	1.10	1.50
Ecuador	0.80	1.05	1.40	Uruguay	1.80	2.20	3.05
El Salvador	<u>0.80</u>	1.05	1.40	Windward Is.	1.20	1.55	2.15
Guatemala	0.80	1.05	1.40	Venezuela	0.80	1.05	1.40
The Guianas	1.20	1.55	2.15	Unlisted Countries.	----	<u>1.10</u>	<u>1.50</u>

THE BEGINNING OF REGULAR COSTA RICAN AIR MAIL SERVICES (1930-1938).

by Dr RICHARD H SAUNDRY

Costa Rica entered the era of regular scheduled airmail services 11th. March 1930 when mails were flown northwards from San Jose by aircraft operated by Pan American Airways. I have always thought it particularly odd that Costa Rica should have delayed so long in concluding the necessary agreements with the U.S. carriers. Because of vital help PAA had afforded the Costa Rica during the flood emergencies in 1928-29 one would have thought the goodwill engendered would have facilitated early conclusion of a favourable airmail contract, but history tells us Costa Rica was in fact the last of the Central American Republics to enter into an airmail agreement. Apparently a preliminary contract had been agreed as early as July 1929 and test flights into Costa Rica took place in January 1930. I show a test flight cover Cristobal to Puntarenas 30 January (Fig. 1). Interestingly Chomes Beach, Puntarenas, was the landing site in Costa Rica initially preferred by PAA because of the earlier crash of one of their planes through collision with a tree at San Jose whilst trying to take off during flood emergency relief work.

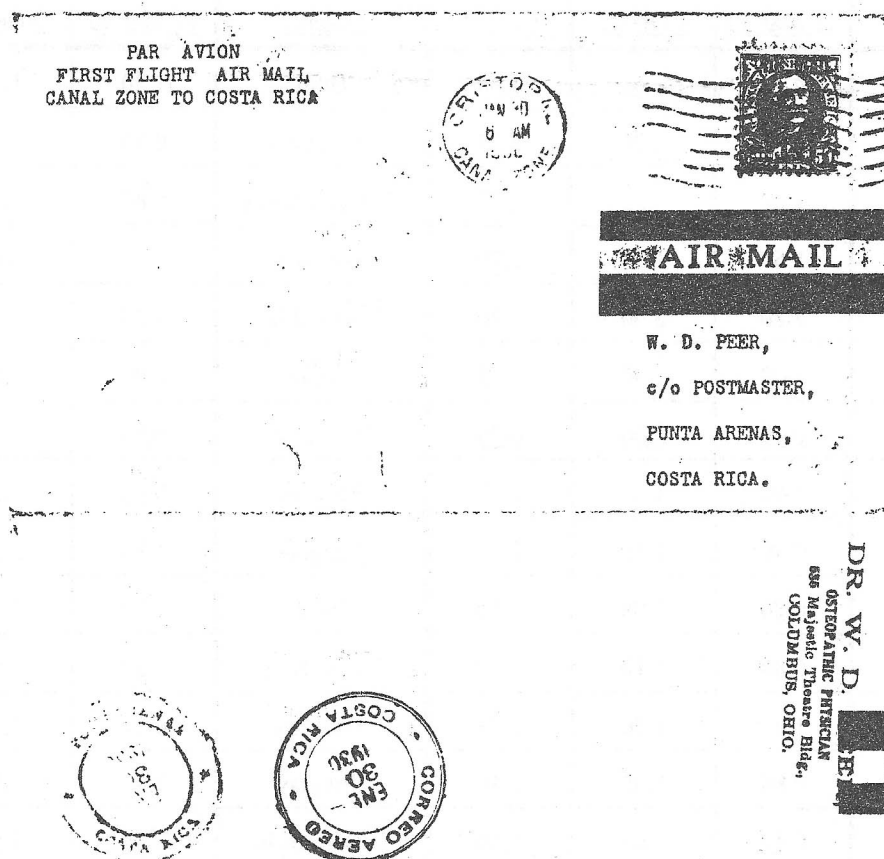


Figure 1. Experimental flight cover.

Cristobal, CZ. January 30, 1930. Backstamped Puntarenas & San Jose, CR, same day.

By the time regular airmails were instigated, however, planes were able to use a designated grass landing site at Sabana, San Jose, presumably cleared of all trees. The switch to San Jose would have been perfectly acceptable to PAA after 1930 since their fleet now included twelve Fokker F-Xs, twenty-eight Ford Trimotors, and three Fokker F-VIIIs, all capable of landing on conventional landing strips, thus altering PAA's former preference for water landing sites. Interestingly the change of landing site to San Jose could not have been that well publicised since as late as June 1930 Puntarenas was still being listed as the Costa Rican landing site by the Mexican Post Office; Puntarenas was specified in the new airmail timetable and map published in the *Vindicador del Servicio Postal* (see article by Marino Riosa (Oct. 1992) in *Mexicana* Vol 41, No.4, pp. 144-147).

Apparently it was not until 27 February 1930 that the sticking point of airmail rates, fixed in US currency, was agreed and set out in another contract. These rates, converted to Costa Rican currency are shown in the accompanying table along with two subsequent rate changes. The rates, based on 15 gm weight steps, cover the period up to the 15th. February 1938 when newer tariffs based on 5 g weight steps were introduced.

By March 1930 PAA were operating two US Foreign Air Mail Routes (FAM's) through Central America; the routes were designated Nos. 5 and 8. FAM 5 connected Miami with Cristobal in the Canal Zone, and by March 1930 intermediary the points of Belize, Havana, Managua, David (Republic of Panama), San Lorenzo (Honduras), and San Salvador (outward mails only; a two-way service to El Salvador not beginning until July 1930) were being provided with airmail services. FAM 8, connected Brownsville, Texas with Cristobal via Mexico City and Guatemala City, making a junction with FAM 5 at San Lorenzo.

Furthermore by the time Costa Rica was first provided with FAM services, Route 5 had been extended beyond the Canal Zone to Barraquilla and Cartagena in Colombia, and to Curacao. Connection at Miami with FAM Routes 6 and 7 allowed mails to be flown as far as the Caribbean, Trinidad and the Guianas or to the Bahamas. Connection with FAM 9 at Cristobal allowed mails to be flown down the Pacific Coast of South America to Santiago, and on to Buenos Aires or Montevideo. Thus, right from the beginning of regular Costa Rican airmail services it was possible to send airmails to most countries of the Americas.

The American Air Mail Catalogue records that on the first northbound flight to Miami on 11th March the number of covers carried were:- 2656 to Miami, 98 to Managua, 67 to San Lorenzo, 172 to San Salvador, 22 to Belize, and 161 to Havana. The number quoted for Miami included those addressed to destinations beyond the USA, such as to Canada. At the same date 300 covers were despatched via FAM Route 8, mostly to destinations in Guatemala or Mexico. The first southbound flight probably took place 13th. March, not on the 11th. as is usually stated. 386 letters were flown to Cristobal, 73 to Colon, and 225 to Panama. Those flown to Cristobal included any intended for onward transmission to destinations in South America. These figures allow us to compute 3476 northbound first flight covers, and 684 flown to the south, a grand total of some 4160 covers.

Covers carried to certain destinations are elusive, whereas those flown to Miami are relatively plentiful. Collectors are advised to buy covers flown to Miami only if in pristine condition since it is the present writer's distinct impression that such covers are regularly being offered for sale, most in less than perfect condition and worth only a fraction of the asking price. Incoming first flight covers can also be collected and seem scarce. The American Air Mail Catalogue lists 46 covers from Panama (Fig.2) but there were probably others sent from Cristobal. Incidentally there is no listing for incoming first flight covers from either Miami or Brownsville, or from any other FAM points. Possibly collectors of the time did not prepare such covers. If such a cover does exist it must be a decided rarity.

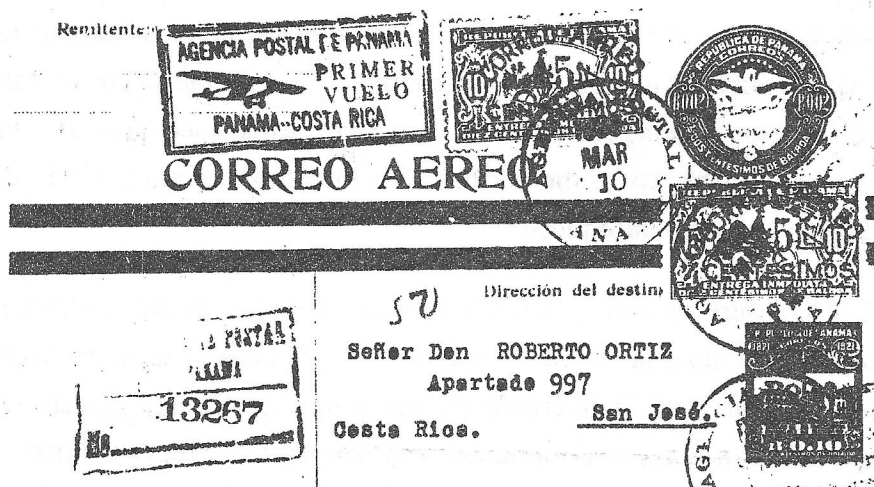


Figure 2. Registered First Flight FAM 5 & 8.
Panama City 10 March 1930. Arrived Costa Rica 11 March.

First flight cachets, usually struck in violet ink, were provided by the Costa Rican Post Office with designations "Mexico", "Canal Zone", "Honduras", "Guatemala", "El Salvador", or "Estados de Unidos de A" (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Inaugural First Flight cover FAM 5 to the USA. 11 March 1930.

Total franking 123 ctms made up of 80 ctms airmail rate to the USA plus 13 ctms first class letter rate to UPAE countries plus 30 ctms registry. Interestingly only the airmail stamps are cancelled "Correo Aereo" 11 march. All the other stamps are cancelled with a registered date stamp of 10 March.

Covers flown southwards to destinations other than to the Canal Zone were given cachets designated "America del Sur" (Fig.4) and covers to destinations not catered for by any of these various wordings were given cachets reading "Extranjero". Examples of covers with inappropriately worded cachets are not unknown. I would love to know the identity of the (almost illegible) signature in the cachets, presumably that of the Costa Rican Postmaster General: despite several requests I am still none the wiser.



Figure 4. Inaugural First Flight FAM 5 & 8, San Jose to Panama.
The cover bears a total franking of 53 ctmos comprised of 40 ctmos (2 x 20 ctmos) airmail rate to Panama plus 13 ctmos letter rate to a UPAE country.

Initially there was a total of 66,000 surcharged airmail stamps placed on sale 4th. March. Most were the 20 and 40 ctmos denominations planned to be used in multiples to satisfy most of the newly introduced airmail rates. Most of the 8 ctmos stamps were used in multiples of five amounting to 40 ctmos; the only reason for these stamps existence was to help make the Cl.08 rate to Canada. With a fair number of stamps being snapped up by the philatelic trade, and necessary use of multiple franking to achieve correct franking, it is perhaps not too surprising that practically all the issued stamps were exhausted just by servicing the first flight covers.

Genuinely used commercial covers with these stamps are a decided rarity; I have a cover sent 13 March to Nicaragua bearing a block of 10 of the 8 ctmos stamps to satisfy the 80 ctmos rate (Fig.5). A replacement set of airmail surcharged stamps (10, 5, 20, 40 ctmos and 1 Colon denominations, SG 181-185) had to be rapidly printed, and was made available 16 March.

Now a word about reconciling airmail rates with examples of stamps on airmail covers. Until 19 September 1932 letters had to bear stamps to account for the current first class surface letter rate in addition to the air mail rate. On 11 March 1930 the foreign first class letter rate was 20 ctmos, except to UPAE countries which exchanged letters at the prevailing domestic letter rates, which in Costa Rica was 13 ctmos. On 9 June 1931 the Costa Rican domestic first class letter rate was reduced to 10 ctmos and this was reflected in postage rates to UPAE countries.

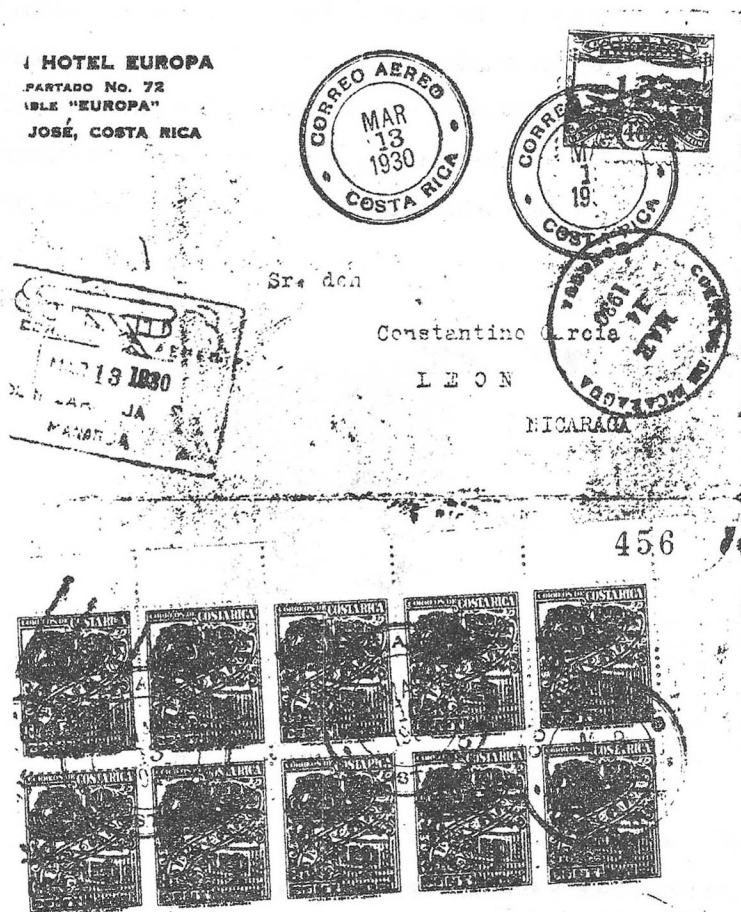


Figure 5. Commercially used airmail cover to Nicaragua 13 march 1930, with block of 10 x 8 ctmos for the airmail rate plus 13 ctmos letter rate.

By Decree No 13 of 19 September 1932 it was decreed "In the future airmail correspondence shall be franked only with the respective and special stamps, which shall represent jointly the value of the postage to be paid to the contractors and that corresponding to the ordinary postage". Thus subsequent rate changes introduced 1 October 1932 and 6 July 1935 made due allowance for the included surface rates.

In the foregoing discussion of rates I have relied heavily on an article published by H. Dana Mitchell in the Costa Rican Philatelist (May-June 1955) Vol IV, pp.12-15. Mitchell's article was written with the US collector in mind, who he believed would have greater opportunity to

acquire Costa Rican airmail covers addressed to American destinations than would any European collector. His message was that collecting Costa Rican airmail covers demonstrating different rates would be both fascinating and a challenge to complete. Fascinating these covers most certainly are, but the possibility in the 1990s of forming a complete collection is practically zero. It is relatively easy to find examples of covers flown to destinations in the USA or the Canal Zone, and I have a handful of covers to a few of the more elusive destinations. Invariably analysis of rates shown by stamps on cover vindicates the rates table set forth by Mitchell: those I can verify I have underlined. As might be expected one does occasionally find the rogue cover that does not accord with the rates table. Some will have been caused by the sender using stamps of the wrong value, but it is possible some figures in Mitchell's rates table are incorrect. I guess some mistakes might have crept in - remember Mitchell's article was written long before the era of personal computers and elsewhere in his article I have identified minor typographical errors. Perhaps our readers can confirm rates to other destinations? In any event re-publication of Mitchell's table is a most worthwhile objective since there are few countries in Latin America for which a rates table as comprehensive as that for Costa Rica is available, truly a lasting testament to one of the great pioneers of Costa Rican philately. The table is published on page 363.